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## MySmartgov.org seeks individuals, organizations who want to streamline local Indiana government

A new organization is looking for individuals and civic organizations that are troubled by redundant and costly layers of local government in Indiana and want to change them.

MySmartgov.org will develop grassroots support to streamline government across the state, making it fairer and more efficient.

Indiana has more layers of local government than all but two of the 11 states of similar size. MySmartgov.org seeks to change that by persuading the 2009 General Assembly to adopt the recommendations to streamline government made by the Indiana Commission on Local Government Reform.

The bipartisan commission, commonly known as the Kernan-Shepard Commission, studied local government in Indiana and in December 2007 issued a report with 27 specific recommendations to cut bureaucracy and streamline government. As its name suggests, the commission was led by former Gov. Joe Kernan and Chief Justice Randall Shepard, who accepted the task at the request of Gov. Mitch Daniels.

It will take legislative action to implement most of the Kernan-Shepard recommendations, and persuading lawmakers to do that – via the grassroots advocacy of Hoosiers whose lives are affected by Indiana’s antiquated local government – is MySmartgov.org’s principal task.

Some steps already have been taken. The 2008 General Assembly abolished township assessing duties in 965 townships, shifting those duties to their respective county assessors. The legislature also set qualifications for some county administrative officers; shifted funding for child welfare from the counties to the state; and established the requirement that all increases in taxes be reviewed by elected officials.

However, the legislature left it to the voters in the state’s 43 largest townships to decide whether they also want to shift assessing duties to the county, and that question will be on the Nov. 4 ballot. Local organizations in the 22 affected counties are working to educate voters in those townships about the issue and urge them to vote “yes” on the ballot question.

“We have a lot of work ahead of us, starting with educating people about these issues,” said Marilyn Schultz, executive director of MySmartgov.org. “The form of local government is probably not on the top of many people’s minds. But if they think about the ways that our 19th-century form of government affects them almost every day – the taxes they pay, the bureaucracy they must unravel – then they will realize that we can do better.

“If they realize that this effort is about fairer, more efficient, common-sense government, they’ll support this effort. As Gov. Kernan said when the report was issued, ‘We’ve got to stop governing like this.’”



MySmartgov.org was formed by individuals and organizations interested in streamlining local government, and it seeks to organize a wide array of like-minded individuals and organizations across the state. It is funded by the Central Indiana Corporate Partnership, an economic development organization; the Indiana Chamber of Commerce, a business organization; and the Indiana Association of Realtors® Inc., a trade organization.

Kevin Brinegar, president of the Indiana Chamber of Commerce, serves as MySmartgov.org's chairman; Louis Mahern, a member of the Kernan-Shepard Commission and a former state senator, is vice chairman; Mark Miles, president of the Central Indiana Corporate Partnership, is treasurer; and Karl Berron, president and chief executive officer of the Indiana Association of Realtors, is secretary.

The Professional Firefighters Union of Indiana has signed on as a supporter, and MySmartgov.org will seek support from similar organizations, as well as civic, social, leadership and service groups.

To develop grassroots support, MySmartgov.org has launched a Web site by the same name and a blog at [www.stopgoverninglikethis.com](http://www.stopgoverninglikethis.com), where a bipartisan team of bloggers posts related news from across the state and opines about the topic. MySmartgov.org also is providing a speakers' bureau, presentation materials and other items to assist local supporters' efforts.

Schultz was state budget director under Govs. Kernan and Frank O'Bannon. She is a 14-year veteran of the Indiana House, where she became known for her expertise in fiscal matters, higher education and issues for people with mental illness and disabilities, and she worked as director of the state's Division of Disabilities, Aging and Rehabilitation.

Schultz also spent almost four years as executive director of the Mental Health Association in Indiana, a statewide advocacy organization, and 11 years at Indiana State University, first reorganizing its government relations office and then as the vice president for planning and budgets.

"We're fortunate to have someone of Marilyn Schultz's stature willing to take on this important task," said Brinegar, MySmartgov.org's chairman. "Her involvement, along with that of so many leaders from across Indiana, shows that this is neither a partisan undertaking nor a haphazard one. This is all about common-sense, smart government."